

ZION'S HERALD AND WESLEYAN JOURNAL.

Published by the Boston Wesleyan Association, for the New England Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Vol. XXII. { REV. A. STEVENS, EDITOR.
FRANKLIN RAND, AGENT.

BOSTON AND PORTLAND, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1851.

TERMS, \$1.50, STRICTLY IN ADVANCE.
OFFICE, No. 7 CORNHILL, BOSTON. } No. 36.

For the Herald and Journal.

REVIEW.

Nature and Blessedness of Christian Purity, by Rev. R. S. FOSTER. With an Introduction by EDWARD S. JAMES, D. D. Lane & Scott. New York, 1851.

[Concluded.]

The author devotes a chapter to prove that the high state of moral and spiritual excellence under consideration is attainable in this life; quoting the memorable words of an old worthy of the church, "The Bible, the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants," he addresses himself to the Book of the Lord, and from its direct, as well as inferential teachings, shows this great doctrine has the sanction of the Scriptures. To use Mr. Foster's eloquent and soul-stirring words, "it breathes in the prophetic, thunders in the law, murmurs in the narrative, whispers in the promises, supplicates in the prayers, sparkles in the poetry, resounds in the songs, speaks in the types, glows in the imagery, voices in the language, and burns in the spirit of the whole scheme, from its Alpha to Omega, from its beginning to its end. Holiness, holiness needed, holiness required, holiness offered, holiness attainable, holiness a present duty, a present privilege, a present enjoyment, is the progress and completeness of its wondrous theme! It is the truth glowing all over, webbing all through revelation; the glorious truth which sparkles, and whispers, and sings, and shouts, in all its history, and biography and poetry, and prophecy, and precept, and promise, and prayer; the great central truth of the system.

To prove it is directly taught, the author cites a large number of texts from the Old and New Testaments, under the following heads: passages in which it is taught by command, exhortation, in promise, in declarations, in prayer; and passages in which it is taught as having been experienced. This digest occupies several pages of the work; it is very full and convenient as a reference; nearly all the texts on the subject are here collected, and these texts show as with the light of a sunbeam, that Christian sanctification is as fully supported by inspiration as any other truth of our holy religion. The writer before us then analyzes these various passages, and deduces from them, we think fairly, that holiness is attainable, because,

1. God commands it.
2. It is promised upon practicable conditions.
3. It is prayed for on behalf of the church, by inspired men, yea, by our Saviour himself.
4. It is inculcated in Scripture exhortations.
5. Its attainableness is argued from the declarations of Scripture.
6. It is declared to have been attained.
7. Ample provision is made for it.

On these points Mr. Foster enlarges with great evidence of thought and fidelity of language, and with a constant aim to be practical, making frequent, warm appeals to the reader to enter into the enjoyment of this high Christian privilege.

Having proved, as we think, beyond successful contradiction, that the Scriptures directly teach the doctrine of sanctification, the author contends that the inferential proofs or arguments are sufficient, "without the volume of Divine evidence," or texts he quotes, to satisfy every candid inquirer—these inferential proofs he classes as follows:

1. God is infinitely holy, so proclaimed and so admitted to be. By consequence all sin is utterly and without restriction offensive to him; "the abominable thing which his soul hateth." He, therefore, must prefer its entire destruction.
2. If holiness is not attainable in this life, then it cannot be required; or if it is not attainable and yet is required, then an impossibility is required. If the last consequence is assumed, then it follows that God is guilty of the grossest injustice, for he requires an impossibility.
3. A further consequence of the assumption is, if freedom from sin cannot be obtained in this life, it should not be sought or prayed for. To pray for what is impossible in the conviction of the mind should be realized, is mockery, the sheerest hypocrisy.

To the doctrine of Christian perfection many objections have been raised; in most instances these have originated from a misunderstanding of the precise views of its supporters; from their inaccurate definitions, or from the common and correct belief that imperfection is written on all things human. Because a man cannot be perfect in intellect, in the sensibilities, in the will, or in the arts of life, it is concluded no one can be perfect in the Scriptural sense of the word; that man has no right to arrogate in spiritual things what is manifestly unattainable in his mind or body.

As to any arguments grounded on the imperfection of human nature, they are obviously out of place; such reasoning might be justified, were we contending for perfection irrespective of the operations of the Holy Spirit. But as that great agency is the corner stone of our system, and as the power of God is limitless, his power to elevate to this holy estate cannot be denied, although the believer be not synchronically perfect in the thinking or reasoning faculties, or in any other department of his psychological being.

We incline to the belief, however, that the opponents of sanctification who use the argument just noticed, make up the dark ranks of (to use Mr. Foster's words) "materialistic fatalists," of which class a leading opinion is, that man has no spiritual character. With such we mean not here to strive; discussion with them would be more appropriate in an article defending the fundamental principles of the Christian religion.

There is, however, a class of objectors who fully understand the views of Wesley and others with respect to sanctification, and yet boldly pronounce them as unscriptural—not basing their arguments on any inherent imperfection, or on any disability of human nature, but confidently asserting they have the word of God to support their theory. We presume the texts used by these disputants are familiar, such as Gal. 5: 17, I. John 1: 8, Proverbs 20: 9, Job 9: 20, &c. These Mr. Foster analyzes, compares with the contexts, and quotes the opinions of learned critics; making it plain that none of said passages teach anything opposed to the author's doctrine; on the contrary, that some of them confirm it.

We are tempted to extract one text which has often been used by the opponents of Christian perfection, and to the unlearned might seem to bear against the doctrine; it is found in I. Kings 8: 46; "If they sin against thee (for there is no man that sinneth not)." Upon this our author remarks: "this passage taken in its utmost force, only asserts that there is no man that is not a sinner—that has not sinned—which we are earnestly content for our opponents. It says nothing as to the impossibility of our being saved from our sins, which is now the only question. But it is manifest, as has been clearly proved by various commentators, that the real

meaning of the passage is, "If they shall sin against thee (for there is no man that may not sin)." And so the text is no more than an assertion, that no man is infallible; that while men live they are liable to sin; not that they actually do sin, but that they may sin. This, by competent critics, is declared to be the real meaning of the passage. And certainly in no other view does the reading make good sense. Let any one be at the pains to read the context, and he will be convinced of this. But, so understood, it bears nothing against our view; as we fully admit that perfect and holy men may fall away from their perfectness, and, as the text asserts, may sin: the text is in the most complete harmony with our views.

To all who believe it possible to enjoy the inestimable blessing of perfect love, and that their bountiful duty calls for its attainment, advice will be eagerly sought after. In religion as in the sciences, learners should be furnished with suitable instruction; and no book on pious subjects is complete without a portion of its contents being devoted to it.

We recollect to have heard a distinguished minister remark from the pulpit that many writers seem to think, having explained the nature of any Christian privilege and proved it is within the reach of earnest seekers, that their entire duty was performed, their readers were left without any hints as to what would assist in entering upon its enjoyments. Unquestionably such works are deficient; like elementary books on scientific subjects, they should be didactic, and as Christian perfection may be considered a science, means are to be used with faith in Christ for its attainment, with as much discrimination, perseverance and assiduity as are necessary for excellence in any branch of secular learning.

With these views Mr. Foster coincides; he has devoted a chapter to this special object; and, to use the words of Bishop James, in his elegant written and unusually impressive Introduction, "Probably no part of the work will be read more frequently, and with more intense concern, or greater profit, than this." So may it be. We advise with respect to these "means" as the poet, on another subject did,

Nocturna venate manu,
Versate diurna.

For want of space we shall pass over the chapter on "The evidences of entire sanctification," and hasten to remark briefly on that part of the work entitled, "How holiness may be retained, and regained when lost." These are points of the highest moment, and forcibly address themselves to all sincerely desiring to remain in or regain that holy state, without which no man shall see the face of the Lord. As the author remarks, "It is not sufficient that we know how to obtain it; it is not sufficient that we know how to retain it; we must know, also, how to keep, when we have made the acquisition. The secret of its preservation is not less important than the secret of its possession."

But what must be done? Mr. Foster suggests the following: the acquirement of the habit of constant watching against sin; an absolute refusal to comply with temptation under any circumstances to any degree; living in the use of all the ordinary and instituted means of grace, prayer, meditation, searching the Holy Scriptures, the Sacrament, Christian communion, &c.; faith—the life of holiness is eminently a life of faith. "Acquire the habit of living by the minute."

Upon the necessity of these, our author dilates with great earnestness and rare beauty of diction; no one will hesitate to accede to their importance, and the skill of their selection, and yet we will submit, that one has been passed by, to wit—the profession and humble declaration on all suitable occasions of the attainment of this heavenly grace.

It is true, that in a subsequent part of the book, the author says "there may be times when if you live in this grace, it will be well and profitable to declare it." It is manifest, however, from the cautious words here used, and from the general drift of Mr. Foster's teachings, that he does not favor an avowal of the blessing.

In our judgment a meek profession of perfect love is almost essential to its retention; ardent appeals are constantly, without objection, made to the regenerated to make known their gracious state; and why should not that they may have reached the highest grade, that they may be kept steadfast, equally make it known?

After due reflection we conclude that among rules for retaining holiness this should always be: "a meek and humble profession of it on all suitable occasions," and that some such advice should have been given in the chapter under consideration. It could be clearly demonstrated that all the arguments used against such declaration could be adduced with equal force against the profession of justification, and we have yet to meet the Christian who denies the propriety, or (to use the strongest word) the necessity of such latter profession.

It is consoling that we are not unsupported in this view; it agrees with the general tenor of Mr. Wesley's sentiments, and Dr. Peck in his orthodox, orthodox, and highly prized book, so often referred to and quoted from by our author, advises the professors of perfect love, on all proper occasions to communicate to their brethren what the Lord has done for them. "This is his 6th Rule; and thus briefly but satisfactorily does this judicious and sound writer render reasons for giving this counsel. "The lamp of holiness is not lit up to be put under a bushel, but to be set up in a prominent place, that it may give light to all around. 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from the base

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